

CLAIMS

What is Claimed is:

1. A data system comprising:

5 a local area network (LAN) comprising a hub/switch and coupled to a server, said LAN for coupling with a Public Switched Telephone Network for communication therewith;

an ethernet phone coupled to communicate with said LAN;

a cradle for receiving a portable computer system and also coupled to communicate with said LAN without going through said phone;

10 wherein said hub/switch is for detecting a connection to a portable computer system and for performing authentication in response thereto;

wherein said cradle for receiving user authentication data from said portable computer system and transmitting said user authentication data to said server; and

15 wherein said server is for opening a port on said hub/switch allowing said ethernet phone to communicate voice data over said LAN and also allowing said cradle access to said LAN provided said authentication is successful and otherwise for causing said hub/switch to block said ethernet phone and said cradle from accessing said LAN.

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2. A data system as described in Claim 1 further comprising a serial to LAN converter and wherein said cradle is coupled to a serial port of said serial to

LAN converter and wherein said serial to LAN converter is coupled to said hub/switch of said LAN.

3. A data system as described in Claim 1 further comprising a Voice  
5 Over IP Gateway and a non-ethernet telephone and wherein said non-ethernet telephone is coupled to said Voice Over IP Gateway and wherein said Voice Over IP Gateway is coupled to said hub/switch of said LAN.

4. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said server utilizes  
10 backend AAA infrastructure to perform said authentication.

5. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said connection is detected by a linkbeat signal.

6. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said user  
15 authentication data comprises a user identity and user billing information.

7. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said user authentication data is encrypted.

20 8. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said portable computer system is a personal digital assistant (PDA).

9. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said portable computer system comprises a display screen for displaying status information regarding said authentication.

5 10. A data system as described in Claim 1 wherein said ethernet phone and said cradle are located in proximity to each other within a phone booth.

11. A method of performing authentication within a data system  
10 comprising the steps of:  
a) placing a portable computer system into a cradle, said cradle associated with an Ethernet phone;  
b) detecting a connection to said portable computer system in response to said step a), said step b) performed by a hub/switch of a local area network  
15 (LAN) that is connected to a Public Switched Telephone Network;  
c) in response to said step b), a server of said LAN causing said cradle to access user authentication data of said portable computer system and to transmit said user authentication data to said server;  
d) performing user authentication based on said user authentication data;  
20 e) provided said user authentication is successful, said server opening a port on said hub/switch for allowing said Ethernet phone to communicate voice data over said LAN and also allowing said cradle access to said LAN; and

f) provided said user authentication is not successful, said server blocking said Ethernet phone and said cradle from accessing said LAN.

12. A method as described in Claim 11 further comprising the step of  
5 said cradle communicating with said LAN using a serial interface coupled to a serial to LAN converter that is coupled to said hub/switch of said LAN.

13. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said step d) comprises the step of using backend AAA infrastructure to perform said user authentication.  
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14. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said step b) is performed using a linkbeat signal.

15. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said user authentication data comprises a user identity and user billing information.  
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16. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said portable computer system is a personal digital assistant (PDA).

17. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said portable computer  
20 system comprises a display screen and further comprising the step of displaying status information regarding said user authentication.

18. A method as described in Claim 11 wherein said Ethernet phone and said cradle are located in proximity to each other within a phone booth.

19. A system for network security comprising:

5 a server for storing data that defines users and equipment authorized to access said network;

a cradle for receiving a PDA;

a phone associated with said cradle;

10 a direct connection through the network and bypassing the phone between the server and the PDA;

wherein said server is for comparing the stored data with authentication data from the PDA;

15 wherein said server is also for granting user access to the system when comparison of said stored data with said PDA data provides user and equipment authentication;

wherein said server is also for denying user access to the system when comparison of said stored data with said PDA data fails to provide user and equipment authentication;